The Cleveland Museum of Art Presents the Exhibition Egyptomania: Fashion's Conflicted Obsession

Thursday March 30, 2023

Contact the Museum's Media Relations Team:
(216) 707-2261
marketingandcommunications@clevelandart.org

The CMA's distinguished Egyptian collection to be paired with fashion and accessories from Cartier, Chanel, Maison Yeya and more

PRESS KIT

Above left: *Statue of Amenemhat III*, c. 1859–1814 BCE. Egypt, Middle Kingdom, Dynasty 12 (1980–1801 BC), reign of Amenemhat III. Granodiorite; 51.2 x 19.8 x 18.4 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund, 1960.56

Above right: *Cyra (Gown and Cape), "L'ascension" Fall 2022* (detail), 2022. Maison Yeya (Emirati, est. 2006). Yasmine Yeya (Egyptian, b. 1981). Tulle, crepe, horsehair, metal. Image courtesy of Maison Yeya. © Maison Yeya. Photo: Ziga Mihelcic

CLEVELAND (March 30, 2023)—The Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) announces the opening of its newest exhibition, **Egyptomania: Fashion's Conflicted Obsession**, on view in the CMA's Arlene M. and Arthur S. Holden Textile Gallery (gallery 234) and the gallery for ancient Egyptian art (gallery 107) from April 1, 2023, through January 28, 2024. This thought-provoking, intimately scaled exhibition will explore the influence of ancient Egyptian art in fashion, juxtaposing contemporary creations by major fashion and accessories houses, from Chanel and Balmain to Cartier and Maison Yeya, with ancient Egyptian art from the CMA's distinguished collection. Additionally, the exhibition tracks the history of Egyptomania, the allure and fascination with ancient Egyptian culture, in Western Art through a selection of fine and decorative artworks also from the CMA collection.

Visitors will learn about the social ramifications of fashion's interpretation of ancient Egyptian art from the reclamation of ancient Egyptian history by modern Egyptians to Black empowerment. Moreover, the exhibition highlights ways in which art and fashion continue to keep alive the legacy of the ancient Egyptians.

Egyptomania began in the ancient Mediterranean empires, including Greece, Rome and Persia. The French army's 1798 invasion of Egypt, led by Napoleon Bonaparte, reinvigorated European and American interests in ancient Egyptian art and culture. European and American archeological expeditions in Egypt throughout the 19th and 20th centuries sent artifacts back to Western museums, rousing a recurring interest in Egyptomania seen in decorative arts, architecture and fashion.

"Ancient Egyptian culture and style have been extremely influential on fashion designers worldwide," said Darnell-Jamal Lisby, assistant curator of fashion at the CMA. "Fashion's leading minds from Paul Poiret to Karl Lagerfeld and accessory enterprises like Cartier have made Egyptomania a staple design element. Reinterpreting ancient styles and motifs, such as hieroglyphs, religious symbols and historical ancient dress, designers often lean into contemporary audiences' fantasies of ancient Egypt, playing a role in how the public traditionally comprehends and connects with the ancient culture."

Egyptomania: Fashion's Conflicted Obsession hopes to encourage a more nuanced understanding of how fashion and other extensions of our society, from film to advertisements, have shaped our evolving perceptions of ancient Egyptian culture. Highlights include two gowns from the French Egyptian designer Yasmine Yeya; fashions from the Parisian houses of Chanel, Balmain and Givenchy; a King Tutankhamun funerary mask–inspired handbag by Egyptian accessories company Sabry Marouf; early 20th-century Cartier jewelry; Hank Willis Thomas's photograph Da'Nile; and a Statue of Amenemhat III. There are approximately four dozen objects on view, including ones from the CMA's collection and those borrowed from fashion archives worldwide.

"This exploration of fashion is an exciting new avenue for the CMA and provides a unique opportunity to illustrate the lasting impact of Egyptian culture," said William Griswold, director and president of the CMA. "We are immensely pleased to be the beneficiaries of the expertise of our very first curator of fashion, Darnell Lisby."

Generous support of *Egyptomania: Fashion's Conflicted Obsession* is provided by Maison Yeya. Additional support is provided by the Textile Art Alliance.

All exhibitions at the Cleveland Museum of Art are underwritten by the CMA Fund for Exhibitions. Principal annual support is provided by Michael Frank and the late Pat Snyder and by the late Roy L. Williams. Major annual support is provided by the Womens Council of the Cleveland Museum of Art. Generous annual support is provided by an anonymous supporter, the late Dick Blum and Harriet Warm, Gary and Katy Brahler, Cynthia and Dale Brogan, Dr. Ben and Julia Brouhard, Brenda and Marshall Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Walter R. Chapman Jr., Richard and Dian Disantis, the Jeffery Wallace Ellis Trust in memory of Lloyd

H. Ellis Jr., Leigh and Andy Fabens, Janice Hammond and Edward Hemmelgarn, Carl T. Jagatich, Cathy Lincoln, Eva and Rudolf Linnebach, William S. and Margaret F. Lipscomb, Bill and Joyce Litzler, Carl and Lu Anne Morrison, Tim O'Brien and Breck Platner, William J. and Katherine T. O'Neill, Henry Ott-Hansen, Michael and Cindy Resch, the Kelvin and Eleanor Smith Foundation and Margaret and Loyal Wilson.

Complementary Programming
Gallery Talk: Egyptomania
Friday, April 7, 2023, 5 p.m.
Arlene M. and Arthur S. Holden Textile Gallery | Gallery 234
Free; ticket required

Join couture fashion designer Yasmine Yeya and the CMA's assistant curator of fashion Darnell-Jamal Lisby for a discussion on ancient Egypt's influence on contemporary Egyptian fashion. Yeya will discuss her experience as founder and creative director of the luxury fashion house Maison Yeya as well as how her heritage inspired her work, some of which will be on display in the exhibition.

Born in 1981 to an Egyptian father and a mother of French descent, Yasmine Yeya began sewing with utmost intricacy at the early age of seven as she learned couture from her mother and grandmother. Born and raised as Egyptian, Yeya's work naturally reflects the modern Egyptian woman that is independent, strong and seductive. In a modern patriarchal culture, the Egyptian woman still preserves the aura of her ancestors, including the strong Hatshepsut, the beautiful queen Nefertiti and the symbol of seduction, Cleopatra.

Egyptomania: Fashion Expounding on Prejudice Perpetuated by Egyptology
Presented by the Cleveland Archaeological Society and the Archaeological Institute of America
Darnell-Jamal Lisby, Assistant Curator of Fashion, the Cleveland Museum of Art
Wednesday, April 12, 2023, 7 p.m.
Morley Family Lecture Hall
Free

Egyptology and Egyptian archaeology were cemented by the early 20th century. After the 1922 discovery of King Tut's tomb, fashion fiercely adopted Egyptomania as an inspiration despite Egypt's sporadically having inspired design and branding in previous decades. Darnell-Jamal Lisby, the Cleveland Museum of Art's assistant curator of fashion and

curator of Egyptomania: Fashion's Conflicted Obsesssion, discusses the impact of Egyptomania in fashion during the first half of the 20th century. He will also examine the dialogue around racism, fueled by Egyptology, that fashion participated in perpetuating.

Register in advance for the webinar online at the following:

https://cwru.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_1Jkb2VJNTIWw7NQbWI2kpg

All education programs at the Cleveland Museum of Art are underwritten by the CMA Fund for Education. Major annual support is provided by the Womens Council of the Cleveland Museum of Art. Generous annual support is provided by Brenda and Marshall Brown, Florence Kahane Goodman, Eva and Rudolf Linnebach and the Kelvin and Eleanor Smith Foundation. Additional annual support is provided by Gail Bowen in memory of Richard L. Bowen, the M. E. and F. J. Callahan Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Walter R. Chapman Jr., Char and Chuck Fowler, the Giant Eagle Foundation, the Logsdon Family Fund for Education, Roy Smith and the Trilling Family Foundation.